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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 004516

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: PRT TIKRIT: POSSIBLE KURDISH MANEUVERING AROUND AL
TUZ

Classified By: Stephanie Miley, PRT Team Leader, for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

11. (U) This is a PRT Tikrit, Salah ad Din cable.

12. (C) SUMMARY. Recently PRT Tikrit has received several reports of Kurdish attempts to populate with Kurds and garner political support in the area around al Tuz. Separated from the rest of Salah ad Din (SaD) province by the Hamrin mountains, the Tozkhurmato area, where al Tuz is located, is ethnically Turcoman and Kurdish. Fourth Division Iraqi Army Commanding Officer General Abdul Aziz al Mufti, Kurdish and highly political, has also indicated that he would like to move the division headquarters to Kirkuk from Tikrit. While there is no concrete evidence, it appears that Kurdish elements are pushing to establish a political majority in key northern areas of SaD, possibly in the hopes that a referendum will see Kurdistan gain control of the areas. END SUMMARY.

13. (C) The municipality of al Tuz is separated from the rest of Salah ad Din (SaD) province by the Hamrin mountains; located in the Tozkhurmato area, it is ethnically Turcoman and Kurdish. PRT has been hearing sporadic reports that loyalties among the residents are split, with some Turcoman sheikhs wanting to remain with SaD, but others, including the Mayor, apparently paying homage to Kirkuk. Since the beginning of Ramadan, the Provincial Council (PC) members from Tuz have not attended PC meetings. This is concerning, as the skewed results from the previous election which was boycotted by Sunnis left al Tuz with 17 of 41 PC seats, even though it only accounts for a fraction of the population of the province. Although the PC members from Tuz have stated that it has been unsafe for them to travel to Tikrit, several contacts have told us that the members are attempting to disengage from provincial politics, which they see as Sunni-dominated. At a recent Sheikhs Council meeting, a Turcoman sheikh from al Tuz said he did not want to say why the Tuz members had been absent from the recent PC meetings. Additionally, the Deputy Governor for Security has assured us that police escorts to and from Tuz to Tikrit had been arranged for each meeting but that the Tuz PC members simply refused to attend.

14. (C) Recently the highly political, Kurdish Commander of the Fourth Brigade of the Iraqi Army (IA), General Abdul Aziz al Mufti, indicated that he would like to move the headquarters of the Fourth Division of the IA from Tikrit to Kirkuk. He also passed to CF documents dating from 2004 from the Debaathification Commission regarding the requirement of several provincial council government leaders to be removed from their position for their former associations with the Baath Party, including the Deputy Governor, as if to discredit provincial officials.

Many of the individuals in question received exceptions to hold their positions.

Comment

¶5. (C) While we have no hard data proving that Kurdish elements are pushing to establish a political majority around the city of al Tuz, the comments we have heard from various sources, including that the Tuz Mayor turns over political opponents to the "police elements" of Kirkuk, seem to suggest that it is possible. Strategically speaking, it seems logical that Kurdish elements would move to see that lands North and East of the Hamrin mountains go to Kurdistan. Slowly establishing a pro-Kurdish population in the area would be the most effective way of gaining support for a referendum to move those areas to Kurdish control.

¶6. (C) In mid-November, Feyhaa Al-Bayati, head of a Turcoman women's/human rights NGO, listed out some areas in Iraq where Turcoman were facing tensions with Kurds. She included "Tuz Khurmatu" and "Yangaejah" as two places in Salahadin where Turcomans were facing such pressures from the Kurds. She claimed that if you did not self-identify as Turcoman, you would be harassed by Kurdish Security Forces, maybe you would be followed, maybe your property would be destroyed and so on. She said that these two towns were important to Kurds because they used to belong to Kirkuk province but were "re-organized under Saddam.

END COMMENT.

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¶6. (U) For additional reporting from PRT Tikrit, Salah ad Din, please see our SIPRNET Reporting Blog:
<http://blogs.csp.sgov.gov/blojsom/blog/salahaddin/>.
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